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BASIC PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COUNCIL

Establishment of an open-ended ad hoc intergovernmental panel on forests

Note by the Secretariat

1. At its third session, the Commission on Sustainable Development decided, subject to approval by the Economic and Social Council, to establish an open-ended ad hoc intergovernmental panel on forests, under its aegis, to work in an open, transparent and participatory manner. 1/ The mandate, modalities for establishment and terms of reference of the proposed panel are given in the annex below.

2. At its 9th meeting, on 5 May 1995, the Council agreed to consider the establishment of a panel on forests at the next meeting of the resumed organizational session.

Notes

1/ E/1995/32, chap. I, sect. D.5 (to be issued).

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Annex

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OPEN-ENDED AD HOC INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON FORESTS

I. OBJECTIVE

1. The Ad Hoc Inter-sessional Working Group on Sectoral Issues met in New York from 27 February to 3 March 1995, and recommended that at its third session, in 1995, the Commission on Sustainable Development establish, under its aegis, an open-ended ad hoc intergovernmental panel on forests (to be referred to hereinafter as the "Panel"). The recent Rome Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Forests welcomed such a proposal.

2. The Commission considers further concrete actions on the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests, particularly by Governments, to be an urgent priority. It stresses the need to further assess action already undertaken to combat deforestation and forest degradation and to promote management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests, including environmental and socio-economic impacts, and against that background to propose options for further actions. In order to pursue consensus and formulation of coordinated proposals for action, the Commission decides to establish an open-ended ad hoc intergovernmental panel on forests, under its aegis, to work in an open, transparent and participatory manner.

3. The Panel should promote multidisciplinary action at the international level consistent with the Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests (Forest Principles), adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The Commission recognizes the sovereignty of countries over their natural resources, as defined in principle 1 (a) of the Forest Principles. The Commission also recognizes that the right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.

II. ISSUES FOR PRIORITY ACTION

1. The issues for priority action should include the following elements, which are derived from the Forest Principles and chapter 11 of Agenda 21, and which take into account subsequent international initiatives related to forests, including the report of the ad hoc Inter-sessional Working Group on Sectoral Issues of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Rome Statement on Forestry, 16 and 17 March 1995. In pursuing consensus and formulation of coordinated proposals for action, the Panel should consider the following main interrelated categories of issues:

(a) Implementation of United Nations Conference on Environment and Development decisions related to forests at the national and international level, including an examination of sectoral and cross-sectoral linkages;

(b) International cooperation in financial assistance and technology transfer;

(c) Scientific research, forest assessment and development of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management;

(d) Trade and environment relating to forest products and services;

(e) International organizations and multilateral institutions and instruments including appropriate legal mechanisms.

III. PROGRAMME OF WORK

I

1. Consider actions to promote progress through national forests and land-use plans and programmes in implementing the Forest Principles and chapter 11 and other chapters related to forests in Agenda 21, through an open, transparent and participatory process involving Governments and all interested parties, including major groups, particularly indigenous people and local communities.

2. Identify and consider ways to address the underlying causes of deforestation, forest degradation and the difficulties in implementing sustainable forest management, with particular attention to cross-sectoral factors, including the impact on and from forests, at the national and international levels, such as consumption and production patterns, poverty, population growth, pollution, terms of trade, discriminatory trade practices and unsustainable policies related to sectors such as agriculture, energy and trade.

3. Consistent with the terms of the Convention on Biological Diversity, encourage countries to consider ways and means for the effective protection and use of traditional forest-related knowledge, innovations and practices of forest dwellers, indigenous people and other local communities, as well as fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from such knowledge, innovations and practices.

4. Monitor actions to support afforestation, reforestation and the restoration of forest systems, where appropriate, particularly in countries with fragile ecosystems and affected by desertification and/or drought, particularly in Africa. Within this context, also consider specific actions in countries whose forests are affected by pollution, particularly those with economies in transition in central and eastern Europe.

5. Propose measures to address the needs and requirements of developing countries and other countries with low forest cover in order to promote the activities aimed at conserving the existing coverage, with particular attention to the unique types of forests.

II

1. Explore ways of improving the efficiency and coordination of bilateral and multilateral assistance; and consider ways to address the critical areas relating to the transfer and development of environmentally sound technology on favourable terms as mutually agreed and the mobilization of financial resources, including the provision of new and additional resources with a view to assisting developing countries to pursue policies and comprehensive strategies for achieving sustainable forest management, recalling principles 10 and 11 of the Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests, and the Rome Statement on Forestry, agreed by Ministers Responsible for Forests in March 1995.

III

1. Review existing periodic assessment of forests, including relevant socio-economic and environmental factors, at the global level; identify shortfalls in present assessments relative to policy considerations; and recommend practical ways of improving such assessments. Examine ways to broaden the scientific knowledge and the statistical database available in order to better understand the ecological, economic, cultural and social functions performed by all types of forests. Promote the further development of methodologies for properly valuing the multiple benefits derived from forests in the form of goods and services, and subsequently to consider their inclusion within the systems of national accounting, drawing upon work that has been already undertaken by the United Nations and other relevant organizations.

2. Encourage national implementation of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management and study the feasibility of further developing internationally agreed upon criteria and indicators against which progress towards sustainable forest management of all types of forests could be measured, taking into account the specific regional and subregional conditions of forests and the diversity of economic, social and cultural environments. Within this context, facilitate the engagement of regions and countries not yet involved in developing criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management; share experiences in testing and implementing them; and examine the need to promote comparability and the appropriateness of convergence among international initiatives in this regard.

IV

1. Examine relevant factors affecting trade in forest products and other forest-and-trade issues in an integrated and holistic approach that promotes a supportive relationship between trade and environment. In this connection, identify opportunities and recommend measures for improving market access for forest products on a non-discriminatory basis and consider factors that may distort trade in forest products and affect their value, including pricing, import/export controls, subsidies and the need to remove unilateral bans and boycotts inconsistent with the rules of the international trade system. Promote the development of methodologies to advance the full valuation, including replacement and environmental costs, of forest goods and services, with a view

to promoting full cost internalization. Taking account of the interests of all sectors and particularities of different countries and ensuring full transparency and participation of all interested parties, examine the issue of voluntary certification and labelling of forest products so as to contribute to a better understanding of the role of voluntary certification with regard to the sustainable management of forests, including the impact of certification on developing countries.

V

1. Develop a clearer view of the work being carried out by international organizations and multilateral institutions and under existing instruments as appropriate, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA), in forest-related issues, including United Nations Conference on Environment and Development decisions related to forests, and the institutional linkages emanating therefrom, in order to identify any gaps, and areas requiring enhancement, as well as any areas of duplication.

2. In the light of issues I-V.1 above, based on consensus-building in a step-by-step process, consider and advise on the need, or otherwise, for other instruments or arrangements in further implementation of the Forest Principles, including appropriate legal arrangements and mechanisms covering all types of forests.

IV. PANEL COMPOSITION, ORGANIZATION AND CONDUCT OF WORK

1. The Commission on Sustainable Development recommends that the Panel should be an open-ended intergovernmental body. The Panel shall be composed of representatives from Governments. The European Community shall be entitled to participate in the same manner as under the Economic and Social Council decision as to its status in the Commission on Sustainable Development. Intergovernmental organizations and the full range of non-governmental organizations and other groups would participate as observers in the Panel, on an open-ended and fully participatory basis.

2. The Panel should draw particularly on the resources and technical expertise of relevant organizations, including FAO, UNEP, UNDP, the World Bank, ITTO and other relevant organizations within and outside the United Nations system as well as secretariats of relevant conventions, with appropriate contributions of non-governmental organizations.

3. The Panel will submit a progress report to the fourth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in 1996 and its final conclusions, recommendations and proposals for action to the Commission on Sustainable Development's fifth session in 1997. At its first session, which should be held as soon as practicable in 1995, the Panel will consider the need for dividing

its tasks among appropriate subgroups, as decided. At this session, the Panel will also resolve pending issues on the modalities of work, including election and designation of office-holders. The Panel should seek inputs of major groups in all activities in its programme of work.

V. SECRETARIAT AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO THE PANEL

1. The ultimate responsibility for the process and product of the Panel will reside with the Panel itself. Secretariat support should be provided by a small team under the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat, possibly coordinated by a temporary direct hire, assuming the availability of funds and with the secondment of relevant personnel from the United Nations system and other organizations, where relevant, particularly FAO as task manager for chapter 11 of Agenda 21 in the United Nations system, UNEP, UNDP and ITTO. The secretariat would relay tasks from the Panel to appropriate organizations, develop and maintain an effective communication system between the Panel and organizations, and undertake logistic meeting preparations and document dissemination. Under the direction of the Panel, the secretariat would also facilitate coordination of work undertaken.

2. Operation of the Panel will require funding to support meetings and participation by developing country representatives and major groups from developing countries. In addition to drawing on existing resources where efficient, the following sources of funding should be considered:

(a) Voluntary extrabudgetary contributions from Governments and international organizations to support the work of the Panel;

(b) Secondments from international organizations;

(c) In-kind contributions from countries and international organizations, including hosting meetings.

3. To ensure quick start-up of the Panel, interested Governments and organizations are encouraged to make early voluntary contributions. As far as possible, support from the United Nations system should be derived from the reallocation of resources within existing budgets of United Nations bodies in order to respond to high-priority activities.